

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 3144

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Creating a consumer protection web site.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Technology, Energy & Communications (originally sponsored by Representatives Liias, Loomis, Hunt, Miloscia, Rolfes, Upthegrove, Linville, Green, VanDeWege, Morrell, Conway, Kelley, Nelson, Santos and Ormsby).

**House Committee on Technology, Energy & Communications**  
**Senate Committee on Consumer Protection & Housing**

### **Background:**

Regulatory Assistance. In January of 2006 several state agencies and a representative for local jurisdictions, signed a Project Charter, which created a process to develop and implement a one-stop business portal for Washington citizens and businesses called the Business Portal. In February of 2006 the Governor in Executive Order 06-02 directed all regulatory, taxing, and permitting agencies to improve and simplify service to Washington citizens. Part of that directive was to develop the Business Portal as a single, secure online portal to make licensing, permitting, regulatory approvals or filings, and tax collections easier for businesses.

Approximately 22 state and local government agencies were involved in the development of the Business Portal. The final product was released on June 21, 2007: <http://www.business.wa.gov/>.

The Washington Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) was created in the Office of Financial Management in 2003, helps answer permitting questions and provides access to information about state regulations. In addition, the ORA assists with coordinating between the layers of state, local, and federal permit review. The ORA also maintains an extensive website, which includes permitting information and a link to the Business Portal: <http://www.ora.wa.gov/>.

Consumer Protection Information. The Attorney General's Office (AGO) is responsible for enforcing many of the state's consumer protection laws, including the Consumer Protection Act. The Consumer Protection Division of the AGO performs several consumer protection related functions, including educating the public on issues such as identity theft, mediating complaints between consumers and businesses, and administering the state's lemon law for new motor vehicle warranty enforcement.

The AGO maintains some consumer protection related information on its website. In addition, many state agencies provide consumer protection related information on their individual websites.

**Summary:**

The Department of Information Services (DIS) must coordinate among state agencies to develop a consumer protection web site, which will serve as a one-stop web site for consumer information.

At a minimum, the website must provide information or links to information on:

- insurance information provided by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner;
- child care information provided by the Department of Early Learning;
- financial information provided by the Department of Financial Institutions;
- health care information provided by the Department of Health;
- home care information provided by the Home Care Quality Authority;
- licensing information provided by the Department of Licensing; and
- other information available on existing state agency websites that may be helpful to consumers.

By July 1, 2008, state agencies must report to the DIS on whether they maintain resources for consumers that could be made available through the consumer protection website.

The DIS must make the consumer protection website available to the public by September 1, 2008.

By December 1, 2008, the DIS, in coordination with other state agencies, must develop a plan to build on the consumer protection web site to create a consumer protection portal. This plan must also examine of the feasibility of developing a toll-free information line to support the consumer protection portal.

The AGO must conduct a study to: (1) determine the percentage of consumer complaints alleging violations of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) that are resolved to the consumer's satisfaction; and (2) develop sanctions that the AGO may use if a CPA complaint has merit, and the business fails to respond adequately to the complaint. The AGO must report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	94	0	
Senate	49	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	0	(House concurred)

**Effective:** June 12, 2008